

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2456

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 5296

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDEV, PINT, SF, WA

SUBJECT: NAMIBIA: VIEWS OF AFRIKAANS EDITORS

1. OVER THE PAST WEEK, EMBASSY POLITICAL COUNSELOR HAS TALKED TO MOST OF THE EDITORS OF THE AFRIKAANS PAPERS IN THE JOHANNESBURG-PRETORIA AREA ABOUT THE NAMIBIA INITIATIVE. HE PROVIDED BACKGROUND ON THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S REPORT WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON THE PROVISION FOR 7,5000 UN MILITARY PERSONNEL AND TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE WITH THE EDITORS HOW THEY SEE THE SITUATION AND WHAT DECISION THEY EXPECT FROM THE SAG.

2. INTERESTINGLY, THE ONLY AFRIKAANS PAPER WHOSE EDITOR

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AVOIDED TALKING TO THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR WAS DE BEELD, WHICH IS PART OF THE NASIONALE PERS CHAIN DOMINATED BY DEFENSE MINISTER P.W. BOTHA. THE EDITORS CONTACTED AGREED THAT A PEACEFUL SOLUTION IN NAMIBIA AND, HOPEFULLY, THE EMERGENCE OF A MODERATE GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE A MAJOR IMPACE ON THE POSSIBILITIES FOR CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA. THEY WERE ALSO IN AGREEMENT IN

BELIEVING THAT THERE WAS A HIGH RISK THE PLAN
IF IMPLEMENTED WOULD BREAK DOWN. BUT MOST OF THE
EDITORS WERE IN FAVOR OF MOVING AHEAD.

3. SOME OF THE EDITORS WERE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR
SAG'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S PLAN.
THIS WAS PARTICULARLY TRUE OF LUCAS DE LANGE, ASSISTANT
EDITOR OF DIE TRANSVALER, AND ARTHUR LAKE, EDITOR OF
HOOFSTAD. THEY BELIEVE THAT THE CONTINUED "WHITTILING
AWAY" OF THE ORIGINAL PROPOSAL AND THE SPECTOR OF
WHAT IS SEEN AS A UN "TAKEOVER" IS AIDING THOSE
WHO OPPOSE THE BASIC CONCEPT OF THE WESTERN PROPOSAL.
SOME OF THE EDITORS, INCLUDING LAKE, DID NOT PERSONALLY
BELIEVE THAT THE SYG'S PROPOSAL FOR 7,500 UN TROOPS
WAS OBJECTIONABLE, RATHER THEY STRESSED THAT THE LACK OF
CONSULTATION ON THE ISSUE WAS THE MAIN CAUSE FOR SAG
CONCERN. DE LANGE, HOWEVER, SAW THE DANGER OF THE SAG
LOSING CONTROL OF THE SITUATION AND HE SAID THAT HIS
PAPER WAS CURRENTLY AT A LOSS TO KNOW WHERE THINGS
STOOD. DE LANGE SAID THAT THEY WERE WAITING FOR PIK
BOTHAS PRESS CONFERENCE ON HIS RETURN FROM NEW YORK
AS THEIR GUIDELINE.

4. VIRTUALLY ALL OF THE EDITORS EMPHASIZED THAT THERE
WAS A GROWING REACTION AMONG WHITE SOUTH AFRICANS
AGAINST "TERRORIST" ORGANIZATIONS AND THAT THIS WAS
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AFFECTING CONSIDERATION OF THE NAMIBIAN QUESTION.
THE SHOOTING DOWN OF THE AIR RHODESIA PLANE AND THE MURDER
OF THE SURVIVORS, THEY SAY, HAS ENCOURAGED THE FEELING
THAT ORGANIZATIONS LIKE SWAPO AS WELL AS THE
PATRIOTIC FRONT CANNOT AND SHOULD NOT BE DEALT WITH
THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS.

5. THERE IS ALSO A GENERAL AGREEMENT AMONG THE EDITORS
THAT A SPLIT EXISTS IN THE CABINET ON THE QUESTION OF THE SAG'S
RESPONSE TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S PLAN. MOST OF THE
EDITORS BELIEVE THAT P.W. BOTHA IS LEADING THE OPPOSITION
TO THE PROPOSAL AND THERE WAS THE IMPRESSION THAT HE HAS
GAINED NEW MOMENTUM ON THE ISSUE IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS.
THEY SUGGEST THAT THE INTENSIFICATION OF MANEUVERING FOR
ADVANTAGE IN THE LEADERSHIP RACE HAS EXAGGERATED THE PROBLEM.
DIRK RICHARD OF DIE VADERLAND, FOR EXAMPLE, SAID HE
BELIEVED THAT MINISTER OF PLURAL AFFAIRS CONNIE MULDER
WOULD FEEL OBLIGED TO TAKE A HARDER LINE ON NAMIBIA IN
ORDER TO BOOST HIS STANDING IN THE CAUCUS. HAROLD
PAKENDORF OF OGGENDBLAD SAID HE THOUGH PIK BOTHA
WAS COMING HOME TO PUT OUT THE CONSERVATIVE FIRES.
PAKENDORF SEEMED TO BE THE MOST OPTIMISTIC OF THE

EDITORS. WEPENER OF RAPPORT ALSO EMPHASIZED THAT PIK
BOTH WAS COMPELLED TO THROW UP A SMOKE SCREEN OF
TOUGHNESS AND GIVE THE APPEARANCE OF GOING TO THE BRINK.

6. COMMENT: MOST OF THE AFRIKAANS EDITORS ARE IN THE VERLIGTE
(ENLIGHTENED) WING OF THE NATIONALIST PARTY. THEIR
EDITORIALS, HOWEVER, ARE USUALLY NOT NEARLY SO LIBERAL
AS THEIR PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS AND THIS HAS BEEN TRUE
IN THEIR EDITORIAL COMMENT ON THE NAMIBIAN NEGOTIATION.
AT THE SAME TIME, NO CLEAR LINE HAS EMERGED IN THE
AFRIKAANS PAPERS AS TO WHAT COURSE THE SAG SHOULD PURSUE.
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